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Transcript of the President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters

Following is a transcript of President Carter's news conference in Washington yesterday afternoon, as recorded by The New York Times through the facilities of ABC News.

EXCERPTS

2. C.I.A. Accountability

Q. Do you think it was proper for the C.I.A. to pay off King Hussein and other foreign leaders? And what steps are you taking to make yourself more knowledgeable and more accountable for what the C.I.A. does?

A. Well, I've adopted a policy which

I'm not going to leave of not commenting directly on any specific C.I.A. activity. But I can tell you that I have begun a complete analysis which will be completed within the next week of all activities by the C.I.A. I've received substantial reports already.

I've reviewed the more controversial revelations that have been publicized in the last few days, some quite erroneous, some with some degree of accuracy. These same operations have been reviewed by the Intelligence Oversight Board, an independent board, and also by my predecessor, President Ford. I have not found anything illegal or improper.

If in future assessments, which will come quite early, I discover such an impropriety or an illegality I will not only take immediate action to correct it but also will let the American people know about it.

I might say this. This is a very serious problem of how in a democracy to have adequate intelligence gathered, assessed and used to guarantee the security of our country. It's not part of the American nature to do things in secret. Obviously, historically and still at this modern time there is a necessity to protect sources of information from other nations. Sometimes other Governments cooperate with us fully; sometimes they don't.

But I'll try to be sure, and so will Stan Turner, who will be the next director of the intelligence community. He will try to be sure that everything we do is not only proper and legal, but also compatible with the attitudes of the American people.

One other point I'd like to make is this. It can be extremely damaging to our relationship with other nations, to the potential security of our country even in peacetime, for these kinds of operations which are legitimate and proper to be revealed. It makes it hard for us to lay a groundwork on which we might predicate a successful meeting of a threat to us in time of war if we don't have some degree of secrecy.

I'm quite concerned about the number of people now who have access to this kind of information. And I've been working very closely with the Congressional leaders, yesterday and today, to try to reduce the overall number of people who have access to the sources of information that within the bounds that I've described—propriety and legality and American attitudes toward secrecy—I'll do the best I can not ever to make a mistake. And I'm also assuming on a continuing basis a direct personal responsibility for the operation of all the intelligence agencies in our Government to make sure that they are meeting these standards.

3. Correcting Errors on C.I.A.

Q. If there has been erroneous information, wouldn't it behoove you to correct the record?

A. In some ways we are correcting the record, but if I began to either dispute or confirm every individual story that's written whether correct or erroneous on every matter relating to the C.I.A., then these matters which are necessarily secret would no longer be secret, so I'm not going to comment on individual items that relate to intelligence.

7. Review of C.I.A. Activities

Q. Mr. President, on that same subject, you said earlier that your review of C.I.A. activities had found nothing illegal or improper and you later said that these activities are legitimate and proper. Isn't that a value judgment that the American public might like to share? But how can they if you refuse to give them any idea of what you have discovered during this review about payments, including ones made in secret?

A. That is a value judgment. It's made by the independent Intelligence Oversight Board, which was established and appointed by President Ford. This board has made itself available to the Inspector General and to any employee within the C.I.A. or within the defense intelligence agencies or any other to receive even rumors of impropriety. They have assessed these operations. They made their inquiries in the past, which is in accordance with an executive order issued by President Ford to the Attorney General of the United States and also to the President.

I have read that correspondence. It's quite voluminous and I think that it's accurate to say that Senator Inouye's committee in the Senate and the appropriate committees in the House have also received this information in the past.

I have talked to Senator Inouye and he confirms what I've just told you. And I think he would also confirm that

the impropriety or the illegality does not exist on any ongoing C.I.A. operation.